

**For Immediate Release
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**DCS Rolls Out Central Intake In Northwest And Southwest Regions
Report child abuse or neglect by calling 1-877-237-0004**

Nashville, TN – On Tuesday, January 25, the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services is introducing Central Intake in the Northwest and Southwest regions of the state. Central Intake provides the public with a single phone number to report suspected abuse and neglect of children. The toll-free phone number for Central Intake is 1-877-237-0004.

“This is a powerful new tool in our effort to further protect children in Tennessee,” said Commissioner Viola P. Miller. “It also provides additional safeguards to support our field staff across the state. All calls are recorded and the data is consistently captured with software designed for this purpose. Every Tennessean has a responsibility to report suspected child abuse or neglect, and Central Intake makes the process easier to navigate.”

The Central Intake process begins when an individual contacts DCS alleging that a child has been abused and/or neglected, or alleging that a child is at imminent risk of being abused and/or neglected. Child Protective Services (CPS) staff members accept oral or written complaints, referrals, or reports from medical personnel, law enforcement officials and members of the general public. Based on the information provided, CPS supervisors determine if the reported concerns meet the criteria for investigation and, if so, assign each referral a priority level, which identifies the appropriate CPS response time, and refer it to the local DCS office for investigation.

A total of 20 counties will be affected by the Central Intake rollout. The Northwest counties include Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Lake, Obion and Weakley counties. The Southwest counties include Chester, Decatur, Fayette, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Lauderdale, McNairy, Madison and Tipton counties. By March of this year, DCS will roll out Central Intake to the remaining four regions – Northeast, Knox, Hamilton and Mid-Cumberland. The county office phone numbers currently used in the Northwest and Southwest regions for reporting suspected abuse and neglect will be used for other purposes, like foster parenting and adoption inquiries.

By consolidating various phone numbers currently used for that purpose, Central Intake offers a more seamless and streamlined service delivery model and serves as a readily identifiable source for such reporting. Moreover, Central Intake also presents a reliable and consistent method of processing and screening reports; referrals are thoroughly documented and carefully considered, and then assigned appropriate priority levels for response. Overall, this model provides Tennesseans with the ability to obtain an expedited response to child welfare concerns.

The Tennessee Department of Children’s Services was established to provide the best possible care for children and youth who are in state custody, or at significant risk of entering custody, and their families. Services provided by DCS include child protective services, foster care, adoption, programs for delinquent youth, probation/aftercare, and treatment and rehabilitation programs for identified youth.

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